



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

of a sinful man. . . . It is not too much to hope that the soft and easy messages of the past years will cease to be heard and the message of redemption for sinful man become the evangel of the years to come." So writes a Scotch preacher from the realities uncovered by God's hot plowshares.

The gospel means the growth and

enrichment and perfection of the soul and a redeemed society of men. But its initial is the relation of the individual life to God through Jesus Christ. The gospel is the most effective ethic, but it must be a redemption or it can have no expulsive and transforming power in human life. This is the great message for the modern pulpit.

JESUS AND SOCRATES

REV. WILLIAM F. BOSTICK

Freeport, Illinois

Probably no two characters have been more compared than Jesus and Socrates. Such comparison enables us to understand both the better, provided only it is not too rhetorical and is very careful as to the facts. Mr. Bostick's article covers this familiar field in such a way as to revive interest in both of the two great lives compared.

It is the purpose of this discussion to point out some of the similarities and dissimilarities of these two great moral teachers.

There are some striking parallelisms in the lives of these two characters. Both came from a country small geographically, yet great in achievement. Socrates is connected with Athens, the most cultured of early cities, where the first public library was established. Jesus is connected with Jerusalem, the most religious of early cities. The father of Socrates was a sculptor, the father of Jesus was a carpenter. Both came from the common people, both had unaristocratic parentage. Both were teachers of the common people, both loved to go where the masses met.

Neither wrote. So far as we know the only thing Jesus wrote was what he scribbled on the ground when Pharisees brought into his presence a fallen woman for condemnation. Socrates, when asked one day why he did not put his words into writing, said, "I would rather write on the hearts of living men than on dead sheep's skins." Both made conversation the business of life. Jesus preached occasionally, but more often imparted his teachings to his disciples in conversation. The Gospel of John records mostly private interviews of Jesus with individuals. Socrates once said, "I have a benevolent habit of pouring out myself to everybody and I would even pay for a listener if I could not get one in any other way."

Both lived the simple life. Jesus once said, "The birds of the heavens have their nests, the foxes have their dens, but the Son of Man has not where to lay his head." Socrates lived on meat and drink of the cheapest sort. He wore no shoes the whole year round and had only one coat for winter and summer. When taunted one day for his lack of pleasures he said, "Which of the two will adopt a soldier's life more easily, the man who cannot get along without expensive living or he whom whatever comes to hand suffices?"

Both were practical moralists and prophets of religion. Both taught the value of the spiritual and higher nature of man. Jesus said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness." "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" He called that man a fool who stuffed his barns and thought merely of his material prosperity. Jesus emphasized the purity of heart and taught men to seek the riches of eternal life. Socrates addressed his countrymen thus:

Men of Athens, I honor and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting every one whom I meet after my manner and convincing him by saying: "O my friend, why do you, who are a citizen of the great and mighty and wise city of Athens, care so much about laying up the greatest amount of money and honor and reputation and so little about wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the soul, which you never regard or heed at all?"

Jesus claimed that he and the Father were one, that what God spoke to him

he uttered. "The words which thou hast given me I have given unto them." Socrates claimed that a spirit, a daimon, from God companioned with him and revealed the truth to his understanding. Both were finally killed by cities which were noted as prophet-killers. Both knew their cities. Jesus wept over Jerusalem, saying, "Oh Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto you. How oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks, but ye would not." Speaking of the persecuting power of Athens, Socrates once exclaimed: "Then I must be a fool if I do not know that in the Athenian state any man can suffer anything!" Both were falsely branded as heretics and teachers of corrupting doctrines, and both were killed by the cities in which their mightiest works had been done.

Jesus made enemies by criticizing the hypocrisy and graft of his contemporary preachers. They said he was a blasphemer because he called himself the Son of God and the Messiah, and was therefore worthy of death. In the Sanhedrin the High Priest made Jesus state under oath whether he was the Messiah or not. When Jesus affirmed it the High Priest rent his clothes, the vote of the council was taken, and Christ was condemned to death. His enemies hated him because he taught a spiritual kingdom with spiritual ideals, and because his messiahship was spiritual instead of temporal as they wanted. After forcing Pilate to consent they dragged Christ out to Calvary and nailed him to the cross. His last words were a prayer for his enemies, a counsel to mother and friend, a committal into

the hands of God. The centurion who stood by him and saw the death exclaimed: "This was indeed the Son of God!"

Socrates made enemies because he went about puncturing the bubble of self-conceited knowledge with which men were inflated. He poked questions at men to prove they did not know half as much as they thought they knew. He preached righteousness and virtue, honesty and character in politics and in the social life of man. Like Jesus he made men question certain handed-down traditions. When a man goes around raising questions about past beliefs and customs he gets into trouble. Jesus questioned the authority of Moses as final in the face of Pharisees and asserted that he himself was of greater authority than Moses, though he had never been to the Jerusalem Seminary for an education. This was pretty strong medicine to swallow for the teachers of orthodoxy at Jerusalem. Socrates questioned the existence of the multitude of Greek gods and asserted the belief in one Supreme Being. Like Jesus he paid attention to the customary places and hours of worship, but privately and publicly criticized some of the old customs of religion. Like Christ, Socrates stirred up enmity. His enemies said he was destroying the belief in the gods and corrupting the morals of the young men of Athens. Because he taught men to think correctly on matters of the moral life and because he taught men to value the moral and spiritual nature above all else, he was called a corrupter.

Like Jesus, Socrates was publicly brought to trial and falsely accused. "If he had been willing to adopt a con-

ciliatory tone, he probably would have escaped, but he refused to lower himself by flattering the people, when he was conscious of no guilt; by a narrow vote he was condemned to drink the hemlock." When the final hour of his death came, in the presence of his friends in prison, with the cup of poison in his hands, offering a prayer that the gods might prosper his journey from this world to the next, without fear he cheerfully drank the poison. His friends present set up a loud lamentation, but the good man asked: "What is this strange outcry? I sent away the women mainly that they might not offend in this way, for I have heard that a man should die in peace. Be quiet, then, and have patience." After he had walked about in his cell for a few minutes the poison began to take effect in his limbs. Lying down on a couch, face covered with his mantle, he waited until the poison crept to his heart. Only once, for a moment, he uncovered his face, saying, "Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius: will you pay the debt?" Being assured, he expired. Says Plato: "Such was the end of our friend whom I may truly call the wisest, and justest, and best of all the men whom I have ever known."

One of the striking differences between Socrates and Jesus is that Socrates claimed the absence in himself of any pretensions to know anything at all. He knew he was ignorant and proved that the men who claimed to know the truth were merely conceited in their knowledge. He said that we must wait for a man from God to show us the true way of life. Over against this confession of our ignorance of the truth stands Jesus with his affirmations of the

truth and with affirmations of finality that have satisfied the world for nineteen hundred years. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall never pass away." Jesus confessed ignorance on some things, yet when he came to moral issues, to righteousness, to rightness of relations of man to man and man to God, he was always positive in his affirmations.

Socrates went at the head in his attempt to save man. Jesus went at the heart. Socrates said that if men only knew the truth, if their understanding of the truth was right, they would do the truth. Salvation, righteousness, virtue were identified with knowledge. Correct the errors of men's minds and you will make them better, you will make them good. By questioning he tried to make men discover the content of such things as piety, justice, temperance, and courage; if men formulated the proper definition of these things in their minds they would do them. No one desires evil, he was wont to say; vicious conduct is based on ignorance. Virtue or righteousness may be imparted to men by teaching them their ignorance, and by giving them an exact knowledge of what is right. "Know thyself" was the motto of his life. The failure of Socrates was his extraordinary omission of the will and its place in moral conduct. He had a strong will himself which exercised such a complete control over his own impulses that he was led to ignore the important results which flowed from the failure of will-power in others. The Greeks in general, and Socrates with them, never succeeded at any time in

drawing a clear line between the intellectual and moral qualities in men. Men need to have an exact understanding of the truth in order to help them do it, but that mere knowledge is not sufficient in helping men to better conduct is proved by the fact that it was not Greek philosophy which Europe adopted as the way of salvation, but Christianity with its more successful way of helping men to righteousness. Until Christianity set up a new ideal, Socrates was the pattern of moral perfection for the pagan world.

The keyword of Socrates was "knowledge," that of Jesus was "faith." In place of "knowing thyself" Jesus said, "This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Instead of making ignorance the source of evil, Jesus taught that out of the heart of man proceed all evil things. Salvation comes not only by instructing the understanding, but by changing the heart through genuine repentance and the power of God. Here Jesus touches the basal moral faculty, the will. The essence of repentance is a change of mind and will. The motive power necessary to change the will of the sinner is the character of God. Sin displeases God as well as injures our brother. God hates sin, but lovingly forgives the sinner when he turns from his sins. The love and character of God as revealed in Christ's life and death have been the factors that have helped men to cease doing that which they knew was wrong. The belief in the forgiving grace and love of God has made men cast their impotent selves on the mercy of a heavenly Father, who in that act has come to them with power

to heal, to forgive, to overcome, and to achieve.

Socrates raked his understanding to find the idea of right conduct and the end of right conduct. Christ confronts the understanding of man and says, "I am the truth, I am the Alpha and Omega." Jesus confronts us with the impact upon our consciousness that he is the incarnation of right conduct. Socrates taught that perception of the right idea would make a man right. Jesus taught that a determined surrender to follow him would make a man right. Socrates made knowledge the superlative faculty of the soul, Jesus made faith the superlative faculty. "All things are possible to him that believes. If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed ye would say unto this mountain, be removed, and it would be done." The prodigal son who illustrates will-power by saying, "I will arise," first had faith to believe in his father's forgiving love. "What shall

we work that we might work the works of God?" asked the Jews. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on the Son of God," said Jesus in reply. Unbelief Jesus condemned as the greatest sin. Faith in Christ saves us. Reason limits man's outlook, faith magnifies it. Reason says, "I do not know whether there is a God or an immortal soul." Faith affirms. To know self limits self; to believe in self magnifies the possibilities of self. The will calls merely on the latent energies of our personality for achievement, faith calls on the personality of God beyond mere self for achievement. The disciples prayed, "Lord increase our faith," not our knowledge. The dynamic of faith has supplanted and eclipsed the dynamic of knowledge in the moral achievement of the race. Socrates led the world for four centuries. Since Jesus has come we see that Socrates was only a tutor to lead the world to Christ.